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Independent Research and Reflection Paper

The technology coordinator plays a very important role in schools, especially if it is a leadership role. Instructional coordinators wear many hats and perform many different duties throughout the school community. A good coordinator must meet many different standards and have an excellent personality for the job. A good coordinator is also a strong leader. Ultimately, an effective instructional technologist follows the philosophy that to do the job well, he must have personal integrity, and the teams’ interests at heart.

The technology coordinator has many duties. Some of the duties that Frazier and Bailey mention in their book include: Making purchasing decisions, assisting with budgeting, working with teachers and students to aide in hardware and software integration, design and conduct professional development programs and training sessions, help build school-wide or district-wide technology plans, identify emerging technologies and trends, and serve as a help desk for basic technical support.

Being in charge of purchasing decisions can be a major responsibility. Often it is the job of the tech coordinator to manage a team in this area. The coordinator needs to do research and budgeting, as well as pull from prior experiences with the technology. Many times administrators look to coordinators to answer every question that is technology related. If it is in the budget, an administrator will typically trust the coordinator and assume that they are using their best judgment. Money is not something that school districts have a lot of, so careful planning and budgeting is important.

Instructional technologists also work heavily with teachers and students right in the classroom. I have seen a technologist do an entire lesson with a SMARTboard to teach the students and the teacher its many uses. Whether it’s new technology or ongoing assistance, the technologist will need to spend a good amount of time in the actual classroom making sure the expensive technology is being used correctly and efficiently.

Instructional coordinators must also design and implement training programs and professional development. This may mean organizing sessions for teachers to attend after school, or creating online help videos for teachers to follow if they are having difficulty with a particular piece of technology. These trainings must be engaging and be of legitimate use for the teachers. Teachers are very busy, and do not like to have their time wasted when they are in the school building.

School-wide or even district-wide technology plans are also the responsibility of a tech coordinator. This means developing the core of what technology will look like in a school or district. This can be a daunting task, but a good leader can get it done in a timely and effective way.

A technology coordinator is also a help desk. Although technology coordinators are not expected to go too deep into technological issues, he should be familiar with basic networking, troubleshooting, and desktop skills. He is often the first line of defense before the IT department is called in. The author of the instructional technology site, for a school in Florida said, “He or she must maintain hardware and arrange for its timely repair. Additionally, the technology coordinator configures local workstations as needed and maintains an inventory of hardware, software and peripherals ("Office of Instructional Technology").

Technologists must also be aware of trending and emerging technologies. Keeping on top of what is new and exciting can help keep schools on the cutting edge, and give children an advantage. This means attending conferences, continuing professional development, and staying current on technology news and PLNs.

There are many components, other than duties, that go into a good technology coordinator. A good tech coordinator has a strong background and a fundamental knowledge about technology and basic networking. He or she should also have a background in education. Having a background and some experience in the classroom helps gain respect from teachers and the coordinators team. A teacher will be much more likely to listen to or trust a prior teacher who understands the issues in a typical classroom, rather than someone who has not had the experience.

Frazier and Bailey also mention that a good technology coordinator is patient and has a strong knowledge of how adults learn. They continue to say, “Since a great deal of their work involves gathering, synthesizing, and disseminating a wealth of information about technology, coordinators must be both highly analytic and personable” (Frazier-Bailey, p.16)

Ultimately, a school district relies on a good leader to help run a technology team. This means that the instructional technologist must be effective. Don Hall gives some good advice in his book on how an instructional coordinator should lead. He talks about delegation, relationships, and getting things going to get the highest amount of productivity out of a team. He tells us that there are three key components to leading a group. These components are feedback and ownership, publicity and ongoing communication, and monitoring and evaluation (p.61).

Hall also mentions the importance of balance between task and relationship. This means making sure that each member knows their role, gets the right support, and ensuring that the group is headed in the right direction (p.31). Goals and objectives must be clear and each member must be able to tell you what it is and understand it. This may mean using manipulatives or other strategies like mind mapping during meetings.

It is important for a technology coordinator not to alienate himself from teachers in the school, nor with his own staff. Using tech jargon is an easy way to this. Similarly, poor leadership skills can create alienation with the team, which in turn causes issues for everyone.

Proper communication is key when working with a team and other related staff. Technology coordinators should communicate and share using relevant and understandable information. The communication should be two-way, meaning that both sides are able to participate and discuss. Without proper communication, the tech team will not prosper, and teachers and administrators will feel distanced and uninvolved (Hall p.175)

A good leader can also delegate work effectively. A team will look for someone to be in charge, and delegation is a clear indicator to staff that they are valued and trusted to get things done. It also allows the leader to make time so that other projects can be finished. Delegation must be done properly. For example, a job where the stakes are not too high and the goals are clear would be a perfect job to give to someone on your team (Hall p.112).

A good technology coordinator is aware of how teams work, and where his team is in the creative process. Hall tells us about the four stages of how teams work: forming, storming, norming, and performing. As a leader, it is important to watch over and assist your team to move through these stages in a timely and effective way. The end goal is to move to the performing stage as quickly as possible, while still going through the necessary forming, storming and norming stages (Hall p.111).

Rob Reilly Ed.D, a former technology coordinator, gives great advice to other technology coordinators to help prevent common pitfalls that can happen. He says “…if a Technology Coordinator is to have any hope of success to facilitate curriculum integration, technology literacy for the staff and students, and provide for effective tactical and strategic planning, a Technology Coordinator…must have a firm plan in-hand and be certain that the expectations of the school system match.”

Reilly recommends that coordinators have goals that are similar to the schools and to convince the team to buy into them. He also tells us to have a personal perspective in regard to technology that provides a vision (much in line with Hall’s recommendations). Coordinators should be able to answer the question of how many people are needed to actually get the job done, because one technology coordinator cannot get it all done alone. Again this is where delegation and teamwork come into play.

One of the biggest points that Reilly makes in his paper is for technology coordinators NOT to become “electronic janitors”. He tells us to adapt the policy “if it takes more than 10 minutes to fix, it gets shipped out.” This makes sense because of the full plate that a technology coordinator is give (Reilly). Ideally, there would be an IT team in place that could take care of the issue in a timely way.

I believe Reilly and Hall would also agree that a strong leader makes clear to the staff what his role is. A team needs to understand the duties and position that their leader has. This also means the leader must hold himself accountable for the team. If the project fails or there is an issue, the technology coordinator should hold himself accountable because he is in charge or his team and delegation. Holding yourself accountable shows that you respect that team, and that you are also a part of it. Ultimately, an effective instructional technologist follows the philosophy that to do the job well, he must have personal integrity, and the teams’ interests at heart.

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